

# **Current Issues and Themes in Education**

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**A Handbook for Practitioners**

**Edited By:  
Suhailah Hussien**



**IIUM PRESS  
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA**

# **CURRENT ISSUES AND THEMES IN EDUCATION: A HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONERS**

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Suhailah Hussien



IIUM Press

Published by:  
IIUM Press  
International Islamic University Malaysia

First Edition, 2011  
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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia    Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Suhailah Hussien  
Current Issues And Themes in Education: A Handbook For Practitioners  
Suhailah Hussien  
Include Index  
ISBN 978-967-418-125-3

ISBN 978-967-418-125-3

Member of Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia - MAPIM  
(Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council)

Printed by:  
IIUM PRINTING SDN. BHD.  
No. 1, Jalan Industri Batu Caves 1/3,  
Taman Perindustrian Batu Caves,  
Batu Caves Centre Point,  
68100 Batu Caves,  
Selangor Darul Ehsan

# Contents

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<b>Foreword</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Acknowledgment</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Authors' Profile</b>	<b>xi</b>

## *Section A      Critical Perspectives on Education*

### **Chapter 1 :**

<b>Constructivism: A Critical Overview</b>	<b>1</b>
--	----------

*S. A. Shahab*

### **Chapter 2 :**

<b>A Critical Analysis of the Crisis of Islamic Education in Malaysia</b>	<b>39</b>
---	-----------

*Suhailah Hussien*

## *Section B      Empowering and Disempowering Systems of Learning*

### **Chapter 3 :**

<b>Enhancing Learning at the SLEU (IIUM)</b>	<b>65</b>
--	-----------

*Nor Azian Md Noor*

### **Chapter 4 :**

<b>The Experience of Academic Failures in a Foreign Land: A Case Study of Malaysian Students in Al Azhar University</b>	<b>89</b>
---	-----------

*Afareez Abd Razak*

## *Section C      Issues in Language Learning*

### **Chapter 5 :**

<b>Interaction between Writing Apprehension, Motivation, Attitude,</b>	
--	--

**And Writing Performance 117***Noor Lide Abu Kassim, Nuraihan Mat Daud and**Nor Shidrah Mat Daud***Chapter 6 :****The Role of Learning Strategies in Learning Arabic Speaking Skills 131***Sueraya Che Haron*

# Chapter 1

## CONSTRUCTIVISM: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

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*S. A. Shahab*

### CONSTRUCTIVISM: AN INITIAL CHARACTERISATION

Currently, it appears that there is no viable alternative to some form of constructivism in epistemology, especially with respect to so-called knowledge of the external world. What else could knowledge be but constructed? But although virtually all of us are constructivists, we do not all place equal emphasis upon the fact that our knowledge is a product of human labour. (We cannot deny that there are special difficulties with respect to knowledge of our own “inner” states, where constructivism might run into trouble. But, if we defiantly cling to constructivism, we run the risk of plunging into the abyss of relativism or even solipsism. The skeptical philosopher might feel motivated to re-examine why it is he or she has faith in constructivism.)

Like religion, constructivism is omnipresent but often is paid only lip-service; thus, the recent encyclopedic volume edited by Dancy and Sosa (1992), gives it only three passing references. And again like religion, constructivism comes in many forms, some of which are more fundamentalist than others -- which, of course, makes it difficult to give even a cursory introductory